

Sleepover by Vault_Emblem

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Summary:

- What is it? -, he mutters once he opens the door, not even hiding his displeasure at being disturbed so late.

At first he doesn't see anyone, then he looks down and he sees the familiar shape of Dustin, who says:

- Good evening, Steve -.

Just some bros having some bro time.

Sleepover

Author's Note:

Disclaimer: I'll just say it now so it doesn't come up in the comments.

Yes, I use hyphens for dialogues and quotation marks for thoughts. Why? Because this is how we do in Italy, the country I'm from (actually there's more freedom in Italy and more than one method to use this kind of punctuation but whatever).

This is the method I've learned and the one I'm used to, and I don't think I'll even change it.

Please, I beg you, stop pointing it out, it's starting to get really annoying, especially when that's the only thing people comment about.

Steve jumps from the surprise when he hears the bell ringing.

Who the hell goes around ringing at doorbells at almost midnight?

He considers bringing his bat to the door, but he eventually decides against it.

The last thing he needs that night is for people to start thinking he's a crazy psycho that goes around his house with a nailed bat for no apparent reason.

If only they knew.

- What is it? -, he mutters once he opens the door, not even hiding his displeasure at being disturbed so late.

At first he doesn't see anyone, then he looks down and he sees the familiar shape of Dustin, who says:

- Good evening, Steve -.

He seems calm, like it's not almost midnight and there's no sign of his mom being with him, and in fact Steve's instincts immediately kick in and he starts asking questions:

- What happened? Who's hurt? Did the portal open again? What... -.

- Steve, Steve calm down -, Dustin says then, interrupting his flow of questions, - Everything's fine -.

- Then why are you here? -, Steve asks then.

It's unlikely that he was just taking a walk nearby and he decided to come and say hi.

- Sleepover -, Dustin said, like that's the most obvious thing in the world.

... When did he ever say something about a sleepover? And why would Dustin be the only one to show up?

- What... what are you talking about? -, Steve asks then, giving voice to his confusion.

- Can I explain inside? I'm freezing here -, Dustin asks and Steve sighs, but of course he lets him inside. He'd never resist that little shit.

It's not the first time Dustin's been inside, but the boy always acts like it is.

- It's just so big -, he had said once, - Why do you have so much space? -.

Steve takes Dustin's backpack - Jesus that's heavy - and he leaves it on the couch, where the two sit down then.

- Do you want something to drink? -, Steve asks.

He doesn't have any kind of fruit juice, but he has water. He has whiskey too but like hell he's gonna give that to a goddamn kid.

- I'm fine -, Dustin says, but Steve still gets up and goes to the kitchen counter, pouring a glass of water and bringing it to the boy, who drinks it like he hasn't drunk in ages.

- Thank god you didn't want anything -, Steve jokes, smirking.

Dustin doesn't reply immediately. He's still drinking.

- Well, you offered it to me and it would've been rude to refuse -, he retorts.

Steve chuckles and he ruffles his hair, much to Dustin's annoyance – but that's not true, he loves it.

Once Dustin's done, Steve finally asks again:

- So, if you say the end of the world hasn't come yet, then why are you here? -.

Dustin shrugs.

- Wanted to hang out -, he says.

Wait wait wait wait. What was what?

Is he for real? Did he come all the way to his house just to “hang out”?

- What? Do you realise how bad this is gonna be if someone has seen you enter? -, Steve says.

He really doesn't need people spreading rumors about him inviting kids to his house at night to do god knows what.

He doesn't even let Dustin reply because he has so many questions and he wants all of them answered immediately: why did he got that stupid idea, how did he arrive there, if someone knows he's there with him, how he's supposed to go back home the next day.

Dustin's trying to explain himself, but that's hard to do since Steve isn't shutting the fuck up yet, so the only thing he can do is to yell:

- I just didn't want to stay with them! Ok? -.

- What? -, Steve asks, surprised by how suddenly the kid has snapped.

- I just... didn't want... to go to their sleepover -, Dustin says, this time slowly.

Their sleepover? Is he talking about his friends? What did they do this time?

- So you thought to have a cooler sleepover with me? -, Steve asks, and he can't help but to smile when he says that, even though he's sure Dustin will comment on how much of an asshole he looks like this.

Actually Dustin doesn't even acknowledge that; he looks pretty sad though.

- ... Yeah -.

He looks deflated, and even if Steve's relieved that nothing bad is happening, he's still worried.

- ... What did they do? -, he asks then, trying to make sense of what's

happening.

Dustin isn't looking at him anymore as he replies:

- Well... Nothing, really, it's just that... -.

- That? -, Steve urges him.

He swears, even though he loves all the kids equally, if they did something to Dustin they're gonna hear from him.

- I didn't want to be the third wheel, or better, the fifth wheel -, Dustin says.

... Fifth wheel? Oh. *Oh*.

Now Steve gets it.

- Will wasn't even with us this time. Y'know how Mrs. Byers gets with this kind of stuff recently -, the kid continues.

- So you walked all the way here because you felt alone and you didn't want to be -, Steve completes for him, and Dustin nods.

There are still a few questions unanswered, but Steve's not mad anymore and well, he understands: he feels the same way whenever he gets to hang out with Nancy and Jonathan – which happens quite often since apart the middle school dweebs they're the only friends he's got left – and he hates it so much, but he never does anything about it apart from those times where he can't take it anymore and he finds an excuse to leave early or not to go in the first place.

It's sad that Dustin has to feel the same way he does; he's a great guy, and he obviously doesn't deserve it.

- It's ok -, Steve says, then he smirks, - In the end it's their loss. You're the real winner here -.

Dustin looks up at him and he smiles as well, replying with:

- I thought so -.

He seems happier now, which is good, very good.

Of course Dustin has to ruin the moment they were having by starting to talk about all the stuff he's brought. Hundreds of board games, cards... How did he even fit all that stuff inside his bag?

- Woah, woah, woah, slow down, tiger -, Steve says then in order to interrupt him, or else they were going to be there all night.

- Yes? -, Dustin immediately asks, looking at him expectantly.

How did it even end up like this? Why are these kids looking up to him so much?

He's just an average teenager; he's not special.

What do they see?

- Well, if we're gonna have a cool sleepover, we can't do this stuff -, he says, - Or else it will be like any other sleepover you ever had, right? -.

Dustin doesn't reply immediately and he takes some time to ponder about what Steve has just said; in the end he has to agree but he immediately recovers asking:

- Can I see your room then? -.

- What? -, Steve asks. He's spoken so fast that he hasn't gotten anything of what Dustin has just said.

- Can I see your room, please? -, Dustin repeats, - You never let us inside but I'm really really curious so please, pretty please? -.

Steve sighs. This fucking kid.

- Ok, sure -, he says and he starts walking away, - C'mon, it's upstairs -.

Steve's room was, well, a classic teenager room, with posters all over the walls – he put that on recently – and stuff left where it shouldn't be; he's usually a pretty tidy person but lately finding the strength to clean up is too much for him, but for Dustin it's like they've just entered into a royal palace.

- Oh my god! -, he exclaims, starting to examine every single angle of the room with such energy that it baffles Steve, but he still prefers that Dustin to the sad Dustin from before.

- Dude -, Dustin says then, turning towards Steve, with clear disappointment in his voice, - You like Madonna, really? -.

Never mind. Steve regrets everything he's just thought.

He doesn't even have the time to defend himself – cause he believes that Madonna is a great artist and she'll be very famous one day – that Dustin's already running to the other corner of the room.

It takes a moment for Steve to realise what he's doing but he's quick enough to snatch a guitar from the kid's hands before he can drop it and break it.

He should've thrown it in the trash when he had the chance; now he's not gonna hear the end of it, forever.

- Woah, Steve! I didn't know you had a guitar! -, Dustin exclaims, and despite what Steve has thought, he's not mocking him. Actually he can see admiration in his eyes.

- 'S not mine -, he mutters, but of course Dustin gives him a suspicious gaze, because of course he doesn't buy it.

- Ok, fine -, Steve says, - Yes, it's mine -.

Dustin's giving him *that* look, and Steve knows he wants the whole story, but does he really have to tell it? He doesn't want to make a fool of himself in front of him, of all people. He already does that on daily basis without any external prompt.

He doesn't say anything and he sits on the bed, and Dustin's immediately beside him.

... He can't get out of that, can't he?

- Well, there was a girl I was into, once -, he says, - And I knew she was into musicians, so I thought that if I learned how to play, she'll be mine for sure -.

- Did it work? -, Dustin asks.

Steve shakes his head.

- Oh -, the kid says, and he looks really surprised, like he never expected someone to refuse Steve Mr. Badass Harrington. As if he doesn't know Nancy has left him; he's not that good with women.

He then shrugs, and he says:

- Well, it's her loss -.

Steve knows he's sincere, and he can't help but to smile.

- Yeah, you're right -.

- So you can play it? -, Dustin asks.

Steve makes a face.

- Kinda -, he says, - I haven't touched it in a long time -.

After the girl's absolute refusal he had stopped to play, but it's not like he was any good to begin with.

- Why? You wanted to hear something? -, he asks then, and Dustin nods.

- I mean -, the boy says then, - If you wanted... I was just curious, that's all -.

Steve thinks about it for a moment. Even if he fails, which he's surely gonna do, is it really that bad?

He doubts Dustin's opinion on him can get worse just for that; they've fought Demodogs and survived, for fuck's sake. Who cares if he isn't the best guitar player in the world?

- Ok, I'll try then -, he says, and Dustin's eyes immediately lighten up.

- Don't raise your expectations too much -, Steve warns him then and, with hesitant fingers, he starts to play the guitar.

Turns out he has to tune it before he can actually play it, and it takes some time for Steve to remember how to do it correctly.

In the end he succeeds, or at least something really close to it, and he starts to play the only tune he remembers.

He's not great, but also... not that bad either, considering that it's been ages since he last played it and even then he wasn't that good to begin with.

Dustin doesn't say anything the whole time, he just looks at him. Then he starts humming the song, and soon he and Steve find themselves singing together.

- Wow! -, Dustin exclaims when the song finishes, - Not bad, really not bad -.

- That's the first positive comment I receive about this whole thing -, Steve comments, but he's not bitter about it. He never cared that much about it and he won't start caring now.

- You should do something with this -, the boy says then, - I can see the potential -.

He's completely serious, and Steve doesn't know what to make of it.

- I don't know -, he says in fact, - I don't think this is for me -.

- I think you should try it -, Dustin retorts, - C'mon man, you already have the perfect poster face, with the hair and everything! -.

Steve can't help but to chuckle, ruffling Dustin's hair again.

- Then I'll think about it -, he says, even though he has no intention of actually doing it, but anything to make the boy happy.

- So, how are you feeling? -, he asks then. After all the main reason Dustin's there is because he wasn't feeling well.

- Good -, the boy replies, and he looks sincere, but then he hesitates. Is he hiding something else?

- What is it? -, Steve asks, encouraging Dustin to say what he wants to say.

There's no way he'll get mad at him now, so he better spit it out immediately.

- ... Could you take me home tomorrow morning? -.

- Yeah, sure -, Steve replies immediately, like it's not a big deal, and actually it isn't; it wouldn't be the first time he gives him a ride.

It's then that he finally remembers to ask Dustin:

- Wait a second, though. What did you say to your mom? -.

Dustin shrugs.

- I told her I was going to Mike's sleepover, and that you were going take me home next morning -, he replies.

- So you really walked all the way here? Have you idea about how dangerous that was?! -, Steve exclaims.

He's not mad by all means, but jeez he'd think that someone who saw the things they saw would be at least a little bit more careful.

- Yeah, I know, I know -, Dustin says, - It was a decision I took at the moment, I didn't think it through -.

- Of course you didn't -, Steve comments, but he decides that it's enough for now.

Dustin isn't there to hear him nagging him like a goddamn mother.

- So... -, Steve says then, glancing at Dustin and smirking, - ... Wanna see some shitty slasher movie? -.

He's full of those, even though he doesn't really love nor hate them. They're fine he guesses, even though he doesn't get scared much often, which kinda is the only point of these movies.

He also knows, however, that this is the kind of forbidden shit kids love to do.

Dustin grins.

He knows, he knows well that he's gonna be scared shitless and maybe he won't be able to sleep that night, or ever again, but he can smell already the others' envy when he's gonna tell them.

- You bet -.

Author's Note:

I've checked about Madonna and apparently she's just begun during the years of Stranger Things, and c'mon Steve would totally like her.

Also for the guitar thing I got inspired by the fact that Joe Keery, Steve's actor, is a musician himself.